

# Somerset County Council.

## HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

DISTRICT:—MINEHEAD.

### STATISTICS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE AREA.

Area (acres): 2,739.

Population: Census 1931, 6,060.  
Estimated 1938, 6,430.  
Number of inhabited houses, 1938, 1,992.  
Number of families or separate occupiers, 1938, 2,232.  
Rateable Value, £78,689.  
Sum represented by a penny rate, £308.

### Social Conditions.

Minehead is best described as a residential health resort. There is no manufacturing industry other than brickworks, but a large section of the population is occupied with the provision of accommodation for visitors. A small proportion is employed in the maintenance and driving of motor conveyances, and a certain number is employed in the various branches of the building trade. The social conditions are good; the number of really necessitous poor is low.

### Vital Statistics.

	TOTAL.	M.	F.	
Live Births—Legitimate ...	63	35	28	Birth Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population, 10.26
Illegitimate ...	3	3	—	
Stillbirths—Legitimate ...	3	2	1	Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births, 43.5.
Deaths ...	74	35	39	Death Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population, 11.5.

Deaths from Puerperal Sepsis:—0.

Deaths from other Puerperal Causes:—0.

Death Rate of Infants under one year of age:—

All Infants per 1,000 live births:—60.6.

Deaths from Cancer (all ages):—10.

Deaths from Measles (all ages):—0.

Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages):—0.

Deaths from Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age):—0.

### NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR.

Diseases.	Cases Notified.	Admitted to Hospital.	Deaths.
Scarlet Fever ...	11	11	—
Puerperal Pyrexia ...	1	—	—
Erysipelas ...	1	—	—
Ophthalmia Neonatorum ...	1	—	—

### ANALYSIS OF TOTAL DEATHS IN AGE GROUPS.

								M.	F.
Deaths under 1 year ...	4—Pneumonia ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	—
	Congenital Debility, &c. ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	2
	Other defined diseases .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	—
" " 2 " ...	0—	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	—
" " 3 " ...	0—	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	—
" " 4 " ...	0—	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	—
" " 5 " ...	0—	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	—
" " 10 " ...	0—	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	—
" " 15 " ...	1—Pneumonia ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	—
" " 20 " ...	1—Other defined diseases ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	1
" " 35 " ...	4—Pulmonary Tuberculosis ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1
	Other liver diseases ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	1
	Suicide ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	—
" " 45 " ...	3—Pulmonary Tuberculosis ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	—
	Heart disease ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	—
	Cancer ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	1
" " 65 " ...	18—Other defined diseases ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	—
	Heart disease ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	4
	Cerebral haemorrhage ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	—
	Cancer ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	6
	Other circulatory diseases ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1
	Bronchitis ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	—
" over 65 " ...	43—Other defined diseases ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4	1
	Heart disease ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3	7
	Other liver diseases ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	2
	Influenza ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	1
	Cerebral haemorrhage ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	5
	Cancer ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1
	Pneumonia ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	1
	Other digestive diseases ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1
	Other circulatory diseases ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5	1
	Peptic Ulcer ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	1
	Bronchitis ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	1
	Nephritis ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	—
	Senile decay ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3	—

(22 deaths over 80).

( 6 deaths over 90).

TUBERCULOSIS.												
Age Periods		NEW CASES.						DEATHS.				
		Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.		Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.				
		M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.			
1	.....	—	—	...	—	—	...	—	—	...	—	—
5	.....	—	—	...	—	1	...	—	—	...	—	—
10	.....	—	—	...	1	—	...	—	—	...	—	—
15	.....	—	—	...	—	—	...	—	—	...	—	—
20	.....	2	4	...	—	—	...	—	—	...	—	—
35	.....	1	1	...	—	—	...	2	1	...	—	—
45	.....	1	1	...	—	—	...	—	—	...	—	—
55	.....	1	—	...	—	—	...	—	—	...	—	—
65 and upwards	.....	1	—	...	—	—	...	—	—	...	—	—
Total		6	6	...	1	1	...	2	1	...	—	—

**Public Health Officers of the Authority.**  
 One part-time Medical Officer.  
 One Public Vaccinator.  
 One Poor Law Officer.  
 One part-time Veterinary Surgeon.

**Nursing in the Home.**  
 (a) The District Nursing Association supports two nurses who are also midwives, and are available for extern midwifery work.  
       Private Nurses are available locally, and are also drawn from Institutions in the neighbouring towns.  
 (b) Infectious Diseases :—No special arrangements are made with regard to the nursing of infectious cases in the home, with the exception of Ophthalmia Neonatorum.

**Midwives.**  
 There are two midwives in the area, maintained by the District Nursing Association.

**Laboratory Facilities.**  
 Clinical material for investigation is sent to the Public Health Laboratories at Taunton. This Institution also deals with the examination of water, milk, and food stuffs.

**Hospitals.**  
 The Minehead and West Somerset Hospital is a charitable Institution providing accommodation for 58 patients. The beds are allotted as follows :—20 male, 20 female, 6 children, and 12 private patients.  
 The Hospital is used by the town and the surrounding district. The management of the Hospital is carried out by a Committee elected by the subscribers.  
 The Honorary Medical Staff consists of five. There are also two Honorary Dental Surgeons and a Radiologist. Besides the Honorary Staff a Resident Medical Officer is maintained.  
 The Hospital has every facility for operative surgery, also for operative dental surgery. There are special departments for X-ray, massage and electrotherapeutics. The Pathological work of the Institution is carried out partly by the County Laboratory and partly by Dr. W. A. Robb, of Exeter.  
 Nine hundred and fifty-one patients were treated as in-patients during the year. Of these 201 were surgical, 286 medical, 94 obstetrical, and 70 dental. The Massage and Electrotherapeutic Department gave 2,469 treatments during the year.

**Infectious Diseases.**  
 The Isolation Hospital for infectious diseases is situated at Tivington. The Hospital is divided into two blocks, and has accommodation for 22 patients. The Hospital was intended for the reception of patients suffering from scarlet fever, diphtheria, and enteric, but if the accommodation allows, cases of encephalitis lethargica, cerebro-spinal meningitis, puerperal septicaemia, erysipelas, and measles complicated with pneumonia are also admitted. The Staff consists of a Medical Officer, Matron, and two permanent Nurses. Temporary Nurses are obtained as required.

**Ambulance Facilities.**  
 For infectious diseases an Ambulance is maintained by the Authority of the Isolation Hospital.  
 For non-infectious diseases two Motor Ambulances are maintained by the St. John Ambulance Brigade. These are supported by voluntary contributions.

**Clinics and Treatment Centres.**  
 Clinics are provided by the Council for the following diseases :—  
   Tuberculosis—Once a week.  
   Orthopædic—Three major clinics are held each year and one minor clinic is held each month.  
   Venereal Diseases—Once a week.  
   Sunlight Treatment—Twice a week.  
 These Clinics are all held at 54, Summerland Avenue, Minehead.

**Water.**  
 The water supply was satisfactorily maintained throughout the year. Compensation water from Nutscale was drawn upon during the drought in the early part of the year.  
 Water mains were laid in Hill View Road and Spring Gardens. Nine re-tappings of the water mains were made to improve existing water supplies. Thirty new tappings were made to supply new properties.  
 Flushing of the incoming mains and of dead end mains was carried out and the filter beds were periodically scoured.  
 Water meters have this year been fixed upon the incoming mains for the purpose of correctly estimating the amount of water received from the several sources. These will be of value in estimating exactly the consumption of water.  
 Samples of water were taken on 13 occasions for analysis, with satisfactory results.

**Sewerage.**  
 With the exception of the evacuation of storm water the drainage system has worked satisfactorily throughout the year. On three occasions excessively heavy rainfall caused the usual



flooding in certain low-lying parts of the town. The districts principally affected were Lower Park, Blenheim Road, Ponsford Road, and Hayfield Road. The recession of the water in the flooded areas was much more rapid than heretofore, owing to the relief of the sewers by the overflows.

The Blenheim Road storm water overflow sewer has justified the expenditure upon it in relieving the pressure on the sewer in The Parade. A further extension of this overflow sewer is contemplated, and it is hoped will give more relief.

The construction of a surface water sewer in Fownes Road has also been contracted for. This sewer will convey the surface water direct into the watercourse below the Alcombe Playing Fields, thus relieving the foul sewer of its extra burden.

**Drains.**

During the year 100 inspections and testings of drains were made and 11 drain stoppages received attention. Your Surveyor reports that the work of drain laying is satisfactorily done by the drain layers, and defects and stoppages are infrequent.

**House Refuse.**

The modern sanitary waggons have undoubtedly contributed to the efficiency of this service. There have been very few complaints. The excellent work done by the personnel is the principal factor in its efficiency. A thankless and unpleasant duty well performed is the opinion of your Surveyor.

The refuse tip has received attention during the year. Measures have been taken to lessen the probability of fire, and in the case of fire to prevent its spread to the plantation on the hillside.

A further increase of roughly 1,000 loads of refuse for 1938 over 1937 is reported.

Rats, which are inseparable from refuse tips, have been dealt with on many occasions, and a considerable number of casualties amongst them were reported.

**Street Scavenging.**

The cleanliness of the town has been well cared for during the year. During August this was achieved by the employment of three extra men coping with the litter left by the holiday-makers. The extra area now covered, owing to the growth of the town, will necessitate a permanent increase in your staff associated with this work during the coming year.

**Sanitary Inspection of the Area.**

The following inspections were made by the Sanitary Inspector during the year:—

- For insufficient water supply—9.
- After infectious diseases—10.
- For re-habitation and defective fittings—17.
- For defective drains—5.
- For nuisances of smoke, rats, smells, dust, &c.—27.
- For various other reasons—9.

**Premises Controlled by Byelaws.**

Minchhead has practically no such premises, and no steps were necessary.

**Swimming Pool.**

The Swimming Pool, built by Mr. Geoffrey Luttrell, has been maintained in a high state of efficiency. In the 1939 Season the temperature of the water is to be raised to meet the wishes of the majority of bathers.

Specimens are taken from the Pool periodically to ascertain that the chlorination plant is functioning satisfactorily.

The Bath has proved a considerable asset to the town.

**Schools.**

The water supply and lavatory accommodation of the schools are adequate. They are well ventilated and thoroughly clean. They are periodically disinfected, and receive special attention after the outbreak of any infectious disease. The health of the scholars is under the care of the School Medical Officers, who make periodical visits of inspection.

The scheme for the immunisation of school-children against diphtheria has been approved. The work will be undertaken by the School Medical Officers during the coming year.

**Disinfection.**

Disinfection of premises and bedding is carried out after all cases of acute infectious fever. It is also carried out in cases where, in the opinion of the doctor in attendance, it is desirable. Such cases are dealt with by the Council on the recommendation of the Doctor concerned.

**Housing.**

Number of new houses erected during the year :—

(i)	By Local Authority	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.
(ii)	By other bodies or persons :—									
	(a) With State Assistance	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.
	(b) Without State Assistance	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	40

1.—Inspection of Dwelling-houses during the year :—

(1)	(a)	Total number of dwelling-houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	77
	(b)	Number of inspections made for the purpose	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	77
(2)	(a)	Number of dwelling-houses (included under sub-head (1) above which were inspected and recorded under the Housing Consolidated Regulations, 1925 & 1932	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	24
	(b)	Number of inspections made for the purpose	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	24
	(c)	Number of houses in which no action was necessary	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	37
(3)		Number of dwelling-houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.
(4)		Number of dwelling-houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-head) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.

2.—Remedy of Defects during the year without service of formal notices :—

Number of defective dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their officers	...	...	...	...	...	15
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3.—Action under Statutory Powers during the Year :—

(a)	Proceedings under sections 9, 10, and 16 of the Housing Act, 1936 :—									
	(1)	Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.

(2) Number of dwelling-houses which were rendered fit after service of formal notices :—		
(a)	By owners ... ..	Nil.
(b)	By Local Authority in default of owners ... ..	Nil.
(b) Proceedings under Public Health Acts :—		
(1)	Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied ... ..	Nil.
(2) Number of dwelling-houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices :—		
(a)	By owners ... ..	Nil.
(b)	By Local Authority in default of owners ... ..	Nil.
(c) Proceedings under sections 11 and 13 of the Housing Act, 1936 :—		
(1)	Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made	Nil.
(2)	Number of dwelling-houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders ...	Nil.
(d) Proceedings under section 12 of the Housing Act, 1936 :—		
(1)	Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were made ... ..	Nil.
(2)	Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the tenement or room having been rendered fit ...	Nil.
4.—Housing Act, 1936.—Part IV.—Overcrowding :—		
(a)	(i.) Number of dwellings overcrowded at the end of the year ... ..	Nil.
	(ii.) Number of families dwelling therein ... ..	Nil.
	(iii.) Number of persons dwelling therein ... ..	Nil.
(b)	Number of new cases of overcrowding reported during the year ... ..	2
(c)	(i.) Number of cases of overcrowding relieved during the year ... ..	2
	(ii.) Number of persons concerned in such cases ... ..	7
(d)	Particulars of any cases in which dwelling-houses have again become overcrowded after the Local Authority have taken steps for the abatement of overcrowding	Nil.
(e)	Any other particulars with respect to overcrowding conditions upon which the Medical Officer of Health may consider it desirable to report ... ..	Nil.

#### Milk Supply.

Number of Producers on the Register—9.

Number of Distributors on the Register, divided as follows :—

(a) Distributors only—1.

(b) Distributors who are also Producers—9.

There are 3 Retailers licensed to sell Grade “A” Milk, 4 Distributors of Tuberculin-tested Milk, and 1 distributor of Pasteurised Milk.

Inspection of the Farms and Dairies is carried out by the Veterinary Inspector and Sanitary Inspector. Cleanliness is enforced and defects pointed out.

The Veterinary Inspector reports that in his department everything is satisfactory.

#### Meat.

The Cowsheds, Dairies, Fish, Provision, and Butchers’ Shops and Public Abattoir are under constant inspection and supervision by your Meat and Sanitary Inspector, and are kept clean and in good order.

#### Adulteration.

No steps have been taken.

#### Camping Sites.

The increase in the number of people desiring to camp in the immediate vicinity of holiday resorts has become a difficult problem. Promiscuous camping might well become a menace to the health of the community. The prohibition of camping except in licensed camps is at present the only method advanced for dealing with this problem.

To meet the demand for camping sites Mr. Luttrell formed a camp near the Warren, beyond the Swimming Pool, equipped with sanitation and water supply. Another camp in the Alcombe district existed for a time. I am instructed that it will not continue during the coming year.

I am voicing the opinion of the Council as a whole when I say that it is definitely against promiscuous camping in this area.

The year covered by this report has been one of difficulty and anxiety. Much extra work and responsibility has been thrown on the Officers of the Council. Rumours of wars and their imminence had their repercussions in this remote countryside as was evidenced by the influx of visitors in the autumn. The effect of the anxiety and uncertainty has been prejudicial to health and detrimental to a normal, cheerful outlook.

Much thought and effort have been diverted from their usual channels to the service of A.R.P. in its manifold aspects. Work has proceeded as usual, however, and there is no sign that its efficiency has suffered.

Consideration of the vital statistics for the period shows a decrease in the number of deaths and an increase in the total number of births compared with the previous year.

From the classification of deaths in age groups nothing emerges of any major significance. Of the total 74 deaths, 43 occurred over the age of 65. As would be expected, the bulk of the deaths were due to those diseases that are associated with the declining years of life. Twenty-two of these deaths occurred over 80, and 6 over 90 years of age. Cancer, as a cause of death, is responsible for 10 of the recorded deaths; pulmonary tuberculosis for 3. New cases of tuberculosis number 13, as compared with 12 last year.

The above statistics are evidence of the satisfactory state of the health of the community. There was no epidemic of infectious diseases. Occasional cases of scarlet fever were more numerous; they were dealt with at the Isolation Hospital. This Institution has done good work throughout the year and its administration and duties are carried out satisfactorily.



The scheme for impounding the water at Nutscale has matured, and the work on the necessary excavations is considerably advanced. The works at Nutscale, however, will be of no advantage during the ensuing year as the works will not be sufficiently advanced for any storage to be possible.

The early months of 1938 gave promise of grave difficulty in maintaining the water supply for the town. The rainfall for the months of February, March, and April reached the total of only 1.19 inches. The result of this early drought was a definite shortage, calling for a recourse to the compensation water at Nutscale; 4,200,000 gallons were thus diverted to the use of the town. The storage tanks built in 1937 at Nutscale were of the greatest value at this juncture.

Fortunately, the early drought was not maintained, and the summer months produced a rainfall that kept the various sources well filled and the supply to the town adequate, even in the holiday period.

Speculation as to what the condition of the water supply would have been had the drought continued throughout August is neither comforting nor profitable. The fact that the water was ample for all needs throughout the year is to be recorded.

The torrential rain that occurred on two occasions in August overtaxed the capacity of the sewers to deal with the surface water. Flooding occurred, but the subsidence of the flood water was much quicker than in previous years. This is attributable to the measures already taken to deal with this nuisance, and their success is undoubted warranty for proceeding further in this direction.

As the land becomes more built over, more paved and drained, so the surface water becomes more abundant and sudden, and more difficult to cope with.

Financial considerations must decide to what extent further procedure in surface drainage is economic.

Under the Town Planning Act the Minehead and District Joint Scheme has been on deposit. The various amendments, and suggestions are being dealt with and it will shortly be due for submission to the Ministry.

Too much stress cannot be laid on the advisability of acquiring sites for open spaces in the development of the town. The gardens which are now being developed in Lower Park, and will ultimately extend to Woodside, are a valuable acquisition. Their extent and value to the amenities of the town would have been greater if the scheme had been put forward earlier. In this connection I should like to emphasise the necessity of looking well into the future in considering this matter of open spaces. Minehead, at present, suffers from being boomed only as a holiday resort, whereas I am convinced that the future of Minehead lies in its recognition as a residential health resort.

I am glad to notice that the roads and paths in the woodlands and hills surrounding the town are being cared for and improved. The more of these paths that come under your control the better, as unless they are maintained they will disappear from lack of use.

Once more I would impress upon you the advisability of including Bratton in your area. Matters have come to my notice which have decided me in bringing this matter again before your consideration. The control of the drainage of this area should be in your hands as it is geographically part and parcel of the Minehead district.

Several improvements have been carried out during the year; amongst them the clearance of old property in Summerland Avenue to form a car park. This improvement has achieved two objects, the clearance of property already overdue for demolition and the establishment of a roomy car park.

The planting of trees wherever possible along the highways of the town has received favourable criticism on all sides. The method of pruning these trees has been the subject of adverse criticism in the Press. In my opinion the criticism is justified.

In conclusion, I should like to thank the Members of the Council for their courtesy and consideration in dealing with matters which I have to bring before their notice.

I should also like to place on record my appreciation of the help that I have invariably received from your Clerk, Mr. Mansfield, and your Surveyor, Mr. Barron.

**W. BAIN, M.B., B.S.Lond.,**

*Medical Officer of Health.*

May, 1939.

